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Continuing professional development in a chamber orchestra: player and management perspectives

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This article reports the findings of a pilot project undertaken by a professional freelance chamber orchestra in collaboration with conservatoire-based researchers exploring the potential value of professional development activities for musicians and their employers. Key members of the orchestra took part in two improvisation workshops, practice-based and animateur-led, each lasting two days. The project was evaluated using questionnaires, interviews, participant feedback, video recordings and musicians’ assessment of their own performances of Schubert’s Octet in F before and after the workshops. The workshops were found to have heightened participants’ self-awareness, increasing their understanding of leadership dynamics within the musical ensemble. Their existing perception of the orchestra as a hierarchical organisation was challenged by the involvement of one member of management in both workshops. While the participants enjoyed the workshops it was not clear how the skills learned could most effectively be incorporated into everyday rehearsing and performing. Suggestions are made in relation to two broad issues arising from the findings: commitment and communication between players and management.

Keywords: freelance musicians; improvisation workshops; communication

Background

Current economic conditions coupled with changing musical tastes have a dramatic effect on classical music. So as to attract a larger and more diverse public, artistic organisations such as orchestras are attempting to be more innovative. Their board members and management have therefore begun to encourage players to be more versatile, and engaging in professional development activities is seen as one way of doing this. Research into professional development for musicians has tended to focus on its effects for music educators (Bauer, Rees, and McAllister 2003; Kokotsaki 2010; Upitis, Smithrim, and Soren 1999); until now little research has been conducted that examines its relevance and potential benefits for orchestral musicians, their employers and audiences.

Smilde (2005) outlines the skills that musicians need for lifelong learning, pointing to the need to consider the changing cultural climate in Europe where the use of technology provides new ways of creating and consuming art. She draws attention to the perception that audiences have also changed, preferring shorter
works in a variety of genres. In addition, she notes that the increasing heterogeneity of society, generally, has opened up new opportunities for creative work that crosses formerly well-established boundaries and thereby has the potential for gaining new audiences. In a similar vein, Bennett (2008) argues that, if their services are to be seen as ‘relevant’, classically trained professional instrumentalists and singers need to understand the cultural backgrounds of the communities in which they live and work. The development of such understanding may require an approach to ‘being a musician’ more flexible than might have been foreseen when they undertook their professional training, as evidenced by a questionnaire study of perceptions of musical expertise undertaken by Ioulia Papageorgi and her colleagues. Respondents were advanced musical learners with varying levels of professional musical experience, from students in tertiary education to portfolio career musicians in four genres: classical, pop, jazz and Scottish traditional music. The professional, non-classically trained musicians were most likely to consider transferable musical skills an important constituent of expertise, and those who were younger (i.e. between the ages of 21 and 26, as opposed to those aged 27 and older) rated their own abilities in this area highest (Papageorgi et al. 2010). While self-rated transferability of musical skills may not represent flexibility in the broader sense, these findings nevertheless suggest that older classically trained musicians with long experience of playing in the same orchestra or singing in the same chorus (Oakland, MacDonald, and Flowers 2012) may find it less easy than do the younger musicians with less professional experience to adapt to a changing work environment.

Given that the symphony orchestra has provided a stable source of employment for thousands of musicians for more than 170 years (Brodsky 2006), it is perhaps not surprising that orchestral players are often the most fervent defenders of their traditions. These go back to the late 1800s, according to Boyle (2007); for example, most orchestral musicians still wear formal evening dress for concerts, and there is a strict hierarchy within the ensemble from conductor to rank and file or tutti players. Boyle disputes the view that artistic planning has begun to be influenced by the changing expectations of audiences (Smilde 2005), noting that concert programming, by and large, continues to follow the tried-and-tested format of overture and concerto performed before the interval, with a symphony afterwards. Boyle goes on to surmise that orchestral musicians perceive such traditions not only to be long-standing and universal but also an important component of what defines a world-class symphony orchestra, and therefore – along with the values and rituals that are passed down from one generation to the next – the very identity of the professional classical musician. While orchestral musicians may defend their traditions, they nevertheless report low job satisfaction and high levels of stress attributable at least in part to their working conditions, over which they have little influence, and challenges to their integrity as artists (Allmendinger, Hackman, and Lehman 1996; Brodsky 2006; Hackman 2009; Parasuraman and Purohit 2000). Recent research supports these findings in so far as freelance orchestral musicians reported that, even though they experienced financial worries since their employment was insecure, they valued the opportunities denied to their colleagues in permanent orchestral posts to make their own decisions in relation to work (Dobson 2011).

The twenty-first-century orchestra, then, is characterised on the one hand by tradition and continuity, and on the other hand by the low job satisfaction experienced by many of its members. The latter has been recognised as a potential
threat for more than a decade; Starr (1997), for example, argues that the motivation of its musicians is central to the effectiveness of the orchestra as an organisation. One way of enhancing players’ commitment to their orchestras is to increase their autonomy as decision-makers (Raelin 2011; Shadur, Kienzle, and Rodwell 1999). This strategy has been used by several American orchestras, according to case studies published as *Fearless Journeys* by Tepavac (2010), as part of their response to the need to adapt to an economic and social climate increasingly less favourable to classical music.

The freelance chamber orchestra occupies the middle ground between the symphony orchestra, with the majority of its players on permanent contracts, regular and guest conductors and small chamber ensembles, such as string quartets, that take a more collaborative approach to leadership (see Davidson and Goode 2002; Murnighan and Conlon 1991; Seddon and Biasutti 2009). Like symphony orchestras, freelance chamber orchestras typically use regular and/or guest conductors, but their membership is likely to be more fluid, as instrumentalists are self-employed and fulfil a variety of roles in a range of organisations.

In the present article we report the results of a pilot project forming the first year of a projected five-year programme of continuing professional development (CPD) and integrated research initiated by such a chamber orchestra. It consists of 33 regular members, 13 of whom are principal players, including the leader of the orchestra; it also employs a principal conductor. Players are selected by audition and, following a successful trial period, are offered freelance membership of the orchestra, whereby they are expected to undertake 66% of the work they are offered. The core of regular members is supplemented by a pool of extra freelance players. Participants in both the CPD programme and the research were representative of the membership of the orchestra, including its management team.

The purpose of the pilot project was to obtain preliminary evidence to support a bid for funding to investigate the potential contribution of the chamber orchestra, generally, to contemporary culture. Specifically, the orchestral managers involved in the pilot project wanted to find out to what extent their participation, alongside that of players, in a programme of CPD would increase players’ motivation for taking more artistic responsibility and deepening their engagement with the ensemble so as to encourage what they described as a ‘risk-taking culture’ in musical performance. This, they believed, could enhance the experience of going to concerts and attract new audiences. The challenge they faced was to motivate players to make a greater commitment to the orchestra even though it provides only a proportion of their income. The research questions asked in this project were:

1. To what extent could the skills learned from participating in continuing professional development activities benefit both individual players and the orchestra as a whole?
2. What considerations should be taken into account when planning a longer-term project with the aim of encouraging innovative artistic performance through professional development?

Since the research was exploratory, a qualitative approach was employed to obtain rich data from a small number of participants. The data from the interviews and group discussions were analysed for patterns of meaning using Thematic Analysis.
(Braun and Clarke 2006). Two over-arching themes emerged: social interactions and tools of change. In addition, data were gathered from questionnaires, performers’ self-evaluations and the researcher’s observation of video-recorded performances.

Methods

Participants

Orchestral musicians were chosen to participate in the project by their managers according to two criteria: (1) to reflect a cross section of the orchestra and (2) to play Schubert’s Octet in F at the beginning and end of the first workshop. They were paid for their participation in the workshops at the same rate as for orchestral sessions. In total, eight principals and five non-principals took part in the project, together with two self-selected members of the management team. Of the 13 players, only three were able to participate in both workshops. After consultation with the players, one member of the management team (a trained instrumental musician) and the first author (a professional singer), referred to from now on as ‘the researcher’, took part in both workshops. The second member of the management team was interviewed but did not take part in either workshop.

The project was undertaken in line with the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics, reviewed and granted approval by the researchers’ institutional Research Ethics Committee. Participants gave their informed consent before the start of the workshops. It was made clear that they were free to withdraw from the workshops at any time without prejudice or financial implications and that they would remain anonymous in all reports of the research.

Materials and apparatus

Questionnaires were issued to all participating players prior to the first workshop they attended. They were designed, in addition to gathering background data on the participants, to ascertain player and management perspectives on the orchestra and the potential to achieve management objectives (see Appendix 1 and Results and discussion section). Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with seven players during the course of the workshops (three players during Workshop 1 and four players during Workshop 2. These players were chosen by the management team to provide a cross section of views and attitudes across the orchestra). Players were asked for feedback on the workshop in addition to more general information about their careers and work with the orchestra (Appendix 2). Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with two members of the management team to explore their aims and vision for the project (Appendix 3). The interview schedules were designed to identify commonalities as well as differences between the views of the players and management team relating to the perceived relevance of the workshop activities to orchestral life and the future of the orchestra that could potentially hinder the introduction of a larger-scale project. The players evaluated their performances of Schubert’s Octet, as individuals and as a group (Appendix 4). Feedback forms were issued to player participants three weeks after the workshops had taken place to gauge the extent to which they had influenced their normal professional work (Appendix 5).
The interviews were audio-recorded using an MP3 voice recorder and the performances of Schubert’s *Octet* were video-recorded by a professional film maker.

**Procedure**

The pre-workshop questionnaires having been completed by participants beforehand, an introduction was provided at the beginning of Workshop 1 by the leaders, two professional dancers, the member of the management team who took part in the workshop, and the researcher. This was followed by group discussion, facilitated by the leaders and the researcher. The players then gave their first performance of Schubert’s *Octet*, which was video-recorded and evaluated by the performers. The semi-structured interviews with three of the players were conducted in a room adjoining the workshop venue at either lunchtime or at the end of the first or second day of the workshop and lasted on average 30 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Both two-day workshops were organised by the management team in so far as they invited the leaders to deliver them. The content was determined by the workshop leaders. The dancers who led Workshop 1 used improvisation to develop participants’ physical awareness in performance, specifically to develop trust in ensemble contexts and explore the giving and taking of leadership. Nine players, one member of the management team and the researcher took part. Instruments were only used in the final 90 minutes of the second day. The players then gave their second performance of Schubert’s *Octet*, which was again video-recorded, and evaluated by the performers. Finally, a second group discussion was facilitated by the researcher.

Workshop 2 took place two months later. Questionnaires were administered to the participants who had not taken part in Workshop 1. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with four players during the course of the two days, as before. Again, the content of Workshop 2 was determined by its leader, a well-known professional cellist who is also an experienced improviser and educator. He led a series of instrumental improvisation exercises with seven players, one member of the management team and the researcher. The exercises were designed to encourage freedom of playing within specified parameters, such as attention to rhythmic detail or texture. The exercises were structured to build individuals’ confidence in their ability to improvise. At the end of the workshop the leader facilitated a group discussion while the researcher took notes. The next day she interviewed two members of the management team (one who had participated in the workshops and one who had not) in the orchestral manager’s office. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Three weeks later the players who had taken part in one or both workshops were asked to complete the feedback forms.

**Results and discussion**

We have used the two over-arching themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data from the interviews and group discussions, social interactions and tools of change, to structure our reporting and discussion of the results. Social interactions examines the effect that the workshops had on self-perception, perception of others and implications for musical performance, while tools of change is concerned with the resolution of the tension between the management’s vision for the orchestra and the reality of the players’ daily experience.
Social interactions

In this section we report and discuss findings from (1) the pre-workshop questionnaires; (2) the discussions before and after Workshop 1; (3) the performers’ and (4) researcher’s observations of the two performances of Schubert’s Octet at the beginning and end of Workshop 1; (5) the discussions before and after Workshop 2.

Pre-workshop questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent to 13 players before the start of the workshops they attended. Twelve completed questionnaires were returned. The questions and answers were as follows:

(1) *How would you describe yourself professionally?* Seven players defined themselves as teacher/instrumentalist, two by their instrument alone, two described themselves in terms of being happy or successful and one player did not answer.

(2) *Approximately what % of your total work is undertaken for the orchestra?* The average percentage of work from (i.e. performing with) the orchestra was 29% of total work (range: 10–40%), although one respondent reported undertaking additional educational work on behalf of the orchestra, not included in this calculation.

(3) *What do you like most about working for the orchestra?* Eight players liked the high standard of musical performance, nine the environment created by supportive colleagues, one player liked the education work and one player liked the management team.

(4) *What do you like least about working for the orchestra?* Lack of work was cited by six players as being problematic and one player reported liking the playing least (this was the same player who enjoyed education work). Two players had difficulties with the understanding between management and players. Other issues mentioned were the hierarchy within the orchestra and low levels of pay and the variable playing standards of the orchestra.

(5) *Would you like to have more input into the artistic decision making of the company?* All but two players felt they would like more input into decision-making within the orchestra; however, five players felt that they would not be taken seriously or that they had received inadequate feedback on previous suggestions.

(6) *What, if anything, would you like to change in the orchestra?* Responses to this question were mixed. More work and secure funding was cited by five, improved communication and reduced hierarchy by three. Two players did not want to change anything and only one said they would like to see riskier programmes.

(7) *What sort of activities would you like to see incorporated in future professional development?* All but one player hoped for improved interactions between players and players and management. Five hoped to be more creative in performance but one player expected nothing from the workshops because they thought there was no management involvement.
What concerns, if any, would you have about taking part in a Professional Development programme? The only concerns raised were those concerning the safety of instruments.

How do you perceive the future of the orchestra? Eleven players were positive about the future given the financial restraints and thought more innovative and diverse work would be planned to attract wider audiences.

What are your personal ambitions as a professional player? Nine players indicated continuous improvement, one would like to take more leadership roles, another to take more risks in performing and one had no further ambitions as a player.

From these responses it can be seen that both management and players had a positive attitude to the future of the orchestra and were anxious to develop audiences and therefore work for the orchestra. However, there are some fundamental differences between management aims and player perceptions. For example, management wished to develop greater risk-taking in performance. While all the players were committed to high-level performance only one individual felt this would be beneficial. Although management would have liked to encourage greater artistic responsibility from the players, there appeared to be scepticism by the players as to the extent that any artistic input they made would be valued.

Workshop 1

The following excerpts from the transcripts of the post-workshop discussion illustrate the generally positive nature of the feedback:

Player 1: For me the hierarchy was broken down. For the first time I felt I had value, it felt completely different playing today. It felt more like I could be what I wanted to be and could say something and ask a question. It’s all been broken down for me today.

Other participants made similar statements, suggesting that the experience of taking part in the workshop had affected the way they made music together. This is illustrated by the member of the management team who also participated:

Manager 1: ...it’s been great to spend two days with you guys as a group – I’m usually the other side. I hope the more we work the less it becomes you sitting on stage and us the other side, more closeness in how we work – even throwing artistic ideas back and forward. It becomes less about us saying right do this and more about you coming and saying we’d like to do this.

These comments suggest that the initial scepticism concerning player/management communication portrayed in the questionnaire responses was lessened as a result of the collaboration in the workshop between representatives from both sides.

Players’ evaluation of performance

The players were asked to rate their pre- and post-workshop performances of the Schubert Octet immediately after each performance, as individuals and as a group, on six dimensions (tone, intonation, expressivity, rhythmic and melodic accuracy and
inter-player communication) and overall, using a scale from 1 = low to 10 = high (Bergee 2003).

As shown in Figure 1, participants gave higher ratings on all dimensions for the second performance. The dimension on which ratings increased the most was player interaction, which may reflect the workshop’s focus on collaboration and trust. While participants did not rate their rhythmic and melodic accuracy as having improved, they rated their expressivity and tone quality higher at the end of the workshop. It can be speculated that better interaction between players may enhance expression in musical performance. It may be, of course, that the players simply focused more on using the interactional skills they had learned in the workshop rather than rhythmic and melodic accuracy. However, as the member of the management team who was listening pointed out, these are likely to be of less importance to the audience than the ‘spirit’ of a performance:

Manager 1: You played the Schubert twice and OK, you know the second time is going to be better but interestingly, just watching it felt, well you know, some things went wrong but I wasn’t focussing on that.

Player 3: Was that ’cos you felt part of it too?

Manager 1: Well maybe, but perhaps you as players knew it wasn’t all there but because you’ve all done [the workshop] together it didn’t matter. Therefore as a listener it didn’t matter. Yes you can say it was better the second time or whatever but as a listener it’s not important, if it’s got the right spirit and things, you go with it regardless, as a listener it doesn’t matter.

This dialogue between player and observer hints at the potential that CPD could have for musicians to gain a better understanding of their audiences. Note that the member of the management team referred to ‘watching’ the performance, which highlights the importance of the visual aspect of listening referred to by Player 2:

![Figure 1. Performance evaluation (based on categories by Bergee 2003).](image-url)
Player 2: It seems to me audiences like to come to concerts where they recognise people where they get the same people so perhaps you have to have a relationship between orchestra and audience.

**Researcher’s observations of the video-recorded performances**

Both performances of Schubert’s *Octet* were recorded by a static video camera positioned so as to capture all the players in one frame. The researcher looked for evidence to support the players’ reported perceptions of greater interaction between them in the second performance. Three notable differences were observed.

1. **The role of leadership in performance.** In the first performance, the first violinist clearly saw their role as ‘leader’, with responsibility for taking charge from the beginning. In the second performance – even before any playing took place – initial comments were made by two other players. Rather than sitting in their accustomed positions, the members of the ensemble chose where to seat themselves, thereby lessening the dominance of the first violinist. Player 10 commented on this difference and the effect it had on collaborative music making:

   Player 10: I felt a massive difference as a leader, ‘cos when I lead an ensemble people look to me for leadership, and for all the leading and in a rehearsal. They’ll want me to hold the rehearsal and do all of that and even when we just played it through I felt so much more support from everyone, and so much more like we’re doing this thing together. It wasn’t just me trying to drag people along.

2. **Increased confidence.** Player 1, who commented previously on the breakdown of hierarchy and who seemed least confident in the first performance, behaved much more confidently in the second performance. They chose to sit next to the leader, played more collaboratively with the leader and played their solos with greater expressivity. Another player, who had initially expressed concern about working outside their ‘comfort zone’, also moved to a central and slightly elevated position for the second performance, commenting afterwards:

   Player 5: I’m a stronger leader than I think I am and it’s not that I’ve never known that I had it inside me but it came out in a way that it doesn’t normally.

3. **Levels of engagement.** In the second performance players were noticeably more engaged musically, particularly when they were not playing. For example, two of the players looked around or checked their instruments during rests in the first performance; in the second performance they seemed to be part of the music throughout. The nature of the players’ engagement changed. Rather than looking at each other to identify cues and play together, they seemed to share the responsibility for creating an ensemble performance which is confirmed by feedback from Player 3:

   Player 3: I think what I noticed in yesterday’s performance was that I was looking round quite a bit for people to play with. To day it felt more democratic.

Workshop activities may have contributed to what the manager termed a more spirited performance and a more visually engaging performance, possibly because players had developed more confidence through a more collaborative style of performing.
Workshop 2

Before the workshop each player was asked in turn to articulate their expectations. At the end, they were asked for their feedback. The following pairs of statements illustrate the relative openness of participants to share their fears and doubts at the outset, and the extent to which they felt they had benefited from the experience:

Player 7 (pre-workshop): I’m very anxious about improvising but would like to be more confident; (post-workshop): It built up my confidence because I didn’t think I could improvise.

Player 8 (pre-workshop): Everything is judged so I always feel that everything is rubbish; (post-workshop): I always assumed I’d get it wrong, I’m still shy but surprised at what I could do.

One player was less enthusiastic:

Player 11 (pre-workshop): I take risks without the conductor knowing; (post-workshop): I wouldn’t feel the need to do any more of these, even though it’s fun and enjoyable.

These comments represent the wide ranging reactions to the workshop. The first two extracts illustrate the low levels of confidence that can be experienced by musicians as a result of constant evaluation by self and others. Although these participants appeared to benefit from the workshop in that they reported increased confidence in their ability to improvise, all three extracts emphasise the participants’ perspective on evaluation in terms of individual skill rather than group music-making. However, the discussion following the workshop provided the opportunity for participants to consider the role of communication within and indeed beyond the group. For example, the member of the management team was receptive to the suggestion that the orchestra might commission new composers to produce improvisatory pieces. One player suggested ways of involving the audience, perhaps by inviting them to suggest themes for improvisation and seating the players within the audience, which led Manager 1 to comment:

Manager 1: It feels like a channel of communication is opening up – a way to break down us, them and the audience.

It was generally agreed that any future workshops should be made available not only to all players but also to all members of the management and administrative teams. If the meaningful dialogue observed in the post-workshop discussion can be sustained in other settings there is clearly potential for artistic planning to be undertaken jointly by management and players.

A direct comparison of the two workshops is not possible because only three participants took part in both. However, a comment from one of them demonstrates the effects of the two workshops on this particular player’s tendency to be self-judging:

Player 7: I really liked that (Workshop 1) because it was so far removed from what I normally do. I’m not judging myself. But when your instruments come into it then
suddenly you feel you’re on the spot and just because of all the things [the Workshop 2 animateur] said, you know you’re constantly being judged on every note we play and whether we’re late or not, and I’m not sure you can ever get rid of that, it’s just the training.

Of the 13 player participants, all but one reported that the workshops had allowed them the opportunity to reflect on their playing and discover aspects of themselves and others that could not have been possible in the more pressured environment of rehearsals and performances. The non-principal players, particularly, appeared to gain confidence. However, because the number of participants was so small, it is not possible to draw general conclusions.

To summarise, it appears that workshop activities which promoted more social engagement could help reduce the negative views of orchestral hierarchy and encourage a more collaborative style of playing. Key to this may be the inclusion of one member of the management team in the workshop activities. Furthermore, the informal environment in which the workshops took place may also have encouraged greater dialogue between all parties.

**Tools of change**

In this section we report and discuss the findings from the thematic analysis of (1) the data from the interviews with players and members of the management team and (2) the post-workshop feedback forms. The analysis brought to light three overlapping themes for consideration in the management’s vision for greater player involvement and the encouragement of a ‘risk-taking culture’: (1) Leadership, which explores the perceptions of the traditional hierarchical model of conductor and orchestra; (2) Commitment, which considers the potential for freelance players to commit to the innovations sought by the organisation without the guarantee of stable employment; (3) Freedom versus constraint, which explores the balancing of the freedom in performance desired by the management with the traditional constraints of classical music performance under a musical director.

**Interviews**

**Leadership.** The members of the management team were keen to explore the potential for players to assume more responsibility for leadership and artistic decision-making within the orchestra:

Manager 2: The idea is for them to develop in the way they want and shape their roles and what they want the orchestra to become and if you look around the world those are the models that are successful and of a very high standard.

The models referred to include the New York based Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, reviewed in the work of Tepavac (2010). Its aims when it was founded were to bring the ideals of democracy, personal involvement and mutual respect typical of chamber music performance into an orchestral setting; these aims were achieved by promoting a form of collaborative leadership whereby every member was invited to take a leadership position. In the course of the interviews Workshop 1 provoked the most references to the role of leadership within the orchestra:
Player 10: ...the leader–follower relationship. That has really made me think about how my, what my role is as a leader, and how I will get people to take more initiative, and try and balance that out a bit, rather than trying to lead all the time.

Player 2: You don’t have to be one of leaders to feel you’re making a really powerful contribution that has a big effect within orchestra. It’s not the leaders that are the make and break ones it’s the strong work that goes round it.

A re-evaluation of the role of leader is suggested in the extract from Player 10’s feedback, and Player 2’s feedback also provides a critique of the traditional relationship between leader and co-performers. Although the orchestra does play from time to time without a conductor, some players still felt that it was the role of the principal conductor (‘musical director’) to provide inspiration and leadership, albeit with the consent of the orchestra:

Player 3: I still think it’s the musical director that can create that energy. If he’s a strong enough personality and people like it and want to go with it.

This view contrasts with that expressed by the member of the management team, emphasising:

Manager 2: [the] players’ expectations of a musical director not the other way round as you’d expect in a hierarchical system. You know, this is what we’d (the orchestra) like to expect coming to play for you (musical director). They’re artists, they make the music, it’s their responsibility to take it their way.

Models of leadership in an orchestral setting have been the topic of extensive research (Atik 1994; Boerner, Kraus, and Gebert 2004; Hunt, Stelluto, and Hooijberg 2004). Boerner and Gebert (2005) point out a paradox: while the individual creativity of the members of organisations needs to be encouraged to the maximum possible degree of freedom, the coordination of individual contributions requires constraints on freedom. In other words, musicians do not usually contribute to the working out of an artistic concept but merely execute it, as it is presented to them by the conductor (Levine and Levine 1996). Because lack of autonomy over musical issues can cause discontent within orchestras, Gebert (2002) argues that this traditional, directive style of leadership is unlikely to work unless the members of the orchestra, who are all highly qualified musicians in their own right, respect and identify strongly with the conductor. This is confirmed by the comments from Player 3, but Players 10 and 2 hint at what Raelin (2003) calls ‘leaderful practice’. In this model leadership is seen not as the property of an individual or individuals but a collective responsibility. The chamber orchestra that is the focus of the present study employs a principal conductor for most but not all their performances. Both players and members of the management team were prepared – albeit to different degrees – to consider the involvement of the musical director in future CPD activities.

Commitment. The non-hierarchical model of music making envisaged by management is likely to require additional commitment from players which one member of management felt could be difficult to achieve:
Manager 1: We’re saying that we want them to come forward with ideas, etc. and maybe the majority of them don’t, they want to turn up and just play the music, they’re not interested in where the organisation goes as long as they’ve got concerts.

Player commitment is compromised of anxieties concerning future employment:

Player 8: The last three years I’ve felt quite disconnected musically at work. I mean they’re my primary employer. I’m a member and I’m still trying to work out why I feel like this. I mean I’ve had considerably less work since becoming a member and then I ended up going down a different avenue and tackling the whole education thing and it was almost like I found a voice doing that, almost like I could facilitate other people doing that ‘cos I wasn’t able to do it at work.

The commitment expressed by management is to help their employees develop skills that will be beneficial to them as individuals as well as to the orchestra, but would not necessarily guarantee them increased employment:

Manager 2: We want to invest in the time to help our musicians develop skills as chamber musicians to be that extraordinary collective that happens to come together from time to time and less an occasional orchestra, with loads of ‘deps’. Then it’s much clearer to someone outside what we’re trying to achieve. [Players are] going to be more aware, take more musical risks.

Rousseau (1995) describes the relationships employees have with their employers in terms of what he calls the psychological contract. There are two kinds of psychological contract. The first is a relational contract, which involves a mutual commitment to the relationship in the long term based on both parties’ trust that if there are imbalances between the contributions of each, these will even out over time. This contrasts with the second kind, the transactional contract, which involves an exchange of services in the short term. McDonald and Makin (2000) point out that employees who have relational contracts with their organisations are likely to be more committed to them than those who have transactional contracts. Another way of describing employees’ commitment to their organisations is that of Meyer and Allen (Meyer 1997), who identify three types of commitment: affective, when an employee stays with their company because they want to; continuance, when they stay because they need to; and normative, when they stay because they feel they ought to. Meyer et al. (1989) found that employees with high continuance commitment rated their performance and prospects for promotion as low. On the basis of the comments by the players in the present study, it would seem as though their commitment to the orchestra is of the continuance variety, although Manager 2 would clearly like to promote the development of skills and greater responsibility in order to encourage the players to make a normative or even affective commitment. More opportunities for management and players to interact and communicate with each other could help establish a more effective psychological contract between them, on the basis of which ideas for innovation could be introduced, shared and realised. Evidence of this potential was seen in the discussion following Workshop 2.

Freedom versus constraints. Artistic excellence is considered by the players to be a strong ‘selling point’ for the orchestra, but they were divided on the question as to whether the management’s vision for encouraging ‘risk taking’ would actually
achieve the desired result of producing more exciting programmes that appeal to a wider audience:

Player 9: What we're doing here [improvising in Workshop 2] is a very interesting creative add on, it can only be an add-on 'cos it's actually not saleable other than an add-on to a main frame. If you change that frame you lose your market totally, and while we mustn't be rigid about it you mustn't jump out of the groove 'cos you make it into something it isn't.

Player 10: I wish it could all be a bit more down to earth sometimes and we could play better and I'm not saying this sort of work won't help us play better 'cos it will, but it's about energy and commitment, practising your part before coming to the rehearsal, you know looking after your own playing...

However, the focus on technical excellence above all else can have a detrimental effect on players:

Player 1: I feel in the orchestra there is so much artistic integrity that's at the forefront of everybody's mind that the fun has just been knocked out of it...It's nice to be challenged in that way in an environment where you know you're not being judged. I didn't think I'd be willing to make a fool of myself but I felt everyone was the same. Being able to express yourself in a safe environment. It's trust.

A potential challenge to innovation is that players with no job security, under constant pressure to perform individually to the highest standard possible so as to secure future employment, are unlikely to give themselves what one player described as 'permission to take risks'. For example, Dobson (2011) notes that freelance musicians constantly have to prove their musical worth with little shared history whereby colleagues could evaluate their normal standard of performance. Although the core players of the orchestra in the present study appeared closely connected socially, the workshops also brought together players who had previously had little contact with each other and were not always on first name terms. Workshop 1, in particular, provided a safe, trusting environment in which players and management could get to know each other better and as a result felt more able to experiment with creativity and self-expression. If older, more established classical trained musicians are to improve their flexibility to cope with a changing music industry (Papageorgi et al. 2010), then creating trust in a working environment could encourage this flexibility and risk-taking. This was perhaps most apparent in the performance evaluations of Schubert's Octet where the breakdown of traditional hierarchy and added confidence allowed the players more flexibility in their approach to music making without the fear of being judged. However, as the following response to the first question on the post-workshop feedback form suggests, it is not clear if the trust and collaboration that was developed in a workshop situation can be incorporated (albeit over a period of time) into the context of real-life rehearsal and performance.

Post-workshop feedback

**Has the workshop had any noticeable influence on your work with the orchestra, your colleagues and musical director [principal conductor]?**
Player 3: We’re being pushed hard and working with [the musical director] requires 100% concentration all the time, so there’s no real opportunity for interaction with other players, other than responding to each other musically other than in ways we would have done anyway. Hopefully one of the offshoots will be better relationships with management (Workshop 1).

Despite the positive nature of the feedback on the workshops at the time, the fact that only five participants responded to the request for post-workshop feedback could be an indication that once back in an orchestral setting it was more difficult for players to see the relevance of skills learned in a non-pressured environment. It may have been hard for participants to relate the collaborative leadership skills explored in Workshop 1 to the traditional model of the conductor leading and the players following. The present musical director had been informed of the workshop activities but did not attend.

To summarise, there appear to be conflicts between the players’ willingness to take more artistic responsibility and the reality of working under a musical director, and between developing more improvisatory, risk-taking programmes and maintaining technical excellence. Clarification of the role of the musical director could reduce these tensions.

Limitations of the research
Had the same participants taken part in both workshops this might have allowed for a fuller comparison of the different approaches taken by the two workshops. This was not possible due to the scheduling commitments of the players, who are all freelancers. There was also insufficient time for players to observe the video recordings of the performances before and after Workshop 1; this could have added an extra dimension to the researcher’s commentary. Finally, the lack of post-workshop feedback completions means that it is difficult confidently to assess the potential long-term impact of CPD for this orchestra.

Conclusions and recommendations
The aim of this research was to assess the potential of a CPD programme for individual chamber musicians with a view to encouraging their greater involvement in the artistic development of the orchestra that provides a proportion of their regular employment. While there is an extensive literature on the importance of the relationship between players and management to musicians’ job satisfaction, very little research to date has examined the aspirations of both for the future of the organisation, from the perspectives of both parties. In this pilot project participants representing management and players expressed the desire for better communication between them. This was achieved to a great extent by the inclusion of members of the management team in the CPD workshops. There is clearly the potential to reduce the perceptions of hierarchy within the orchestra, develop individuals’ confidence in their own and each others’ abilities and open up channels for meaningful communication between management and players; all these are essential for the changes envisaged by the management team. Nevertheless, the perceived improvement in the relationship between players and management is likely to be temporary, unless further
opportunities are created to build on what has already been achieved. The main challenges to the management’s vision for the orchestra are how to (1) increase the commitment of freelance players to an orchestra that provides them with only part-time employment and (2) encourage players to ‘lead from within’ while working at the same time with a principal conductor. However, although previous research such as the case studies of American orchestras undertaken by Tepavac (2010) has shown that the more involved players are in making artistic decisions, the more likely they are to be motivated to be innovative, the financial stability of an orchestra—a major concern for all participants—is not guaranteed by innovation alone.

Wider implications

Professional development is becoming increasingly popular with orchestral institutions as a way of bringing more flexibility to the traditional orchestral model. A greater understanding of what motivates the type of commitment orchestral players make to their employers could determine the success of any such programme, particularly for freelance orchestras. Therefore, we would make two recommendations for the planning of future CPD programmes, based on the evidence from this current research but which could have relevance to other artistic organisations:

Greater player-management understanding: Questionnaire and interview data showed a mismatch between the management’s wish to encourage the players to take greater responsibility for artistic matters, and the players’ views as to the extent to which their artistic input is valued. Regular meetings should be scheduled between management and player representatives, both principals and non-principals, to discuss artistic ideas and innovations. Members of management teams should be encouraged to take part alongside players in CPD programmes.

Monitoring of CPD: The relationship between the skills learned in a workshop situation and those needed in the real-life, highly pressured context of rehearsing and performing to deadlines should be monitored carefully. If managements wish to promote a more risk-taking culture, for example, activities should be designed specifically to limit the tendency of professional classical musicians to judge themselves and each other. However, should other organisations wish to pursue a policy of collaborative leadership, it is worth considering the practicalities of changing their existing model, which are likely to be specific to the organisation.

Notes on contributors

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Jane Ginsborg is Associate Dean of Research, Director of the Centre for Music Performance Research and Programme Leader for Research Degrees at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she holds a Personal Chair. Following a successful freelance career as a professional singer and singing teacher, she studied psychology with the Open University, and completed her ESRC-funded PhD in 1999 at Keele University. Jane is a Chartered Psychologist and was admitted to the British Psychological Society as an Associate Fellow in 2012. She carried out post-doctoral research at the University of Sheffield and has lectured...
in psychology at the University of Manchester, at Leeds Metropolitan University, and for the Open University. Jane has published widely on expert musicians’ approaches to practising and memorizing, and won the British Voice Association’s Van Lawrence Award in 2002 for her research on singers’ memorizing strategies. She is Managing Editor of Music Performance Research, Associate Editor (Music Performance) of the Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies and Associate Editor of Musicae Scientiae; she is also a member of the Editorial Board of Psychology of Music. She is Chair of the Conservatoires UK (CUK) Research Ethics Committee and was elected President of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (ESCOM) in 2012.

References


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**Appendix 1: Preliminary questionnaire**

The questions below are designed to assess the views of player participants prior to undertaking (or not) two professional development workshops. Information from this survey will be totally confidential and no individual will be identified. You are under no obligation to answer every question.

1. How would you describe yourself professionally?
2. Approximately what% of your total work is undertaken for the orchestra?
3. What do you like most about working for the orchestra?
4. What do you like least about working for the orchestra?
5. Would you like to have more input into the artistic decision making of the company?
6. What, if anything, would you like to change in the orchestra?
7. What sort of activities would you like to see incorporated in future professional development?
8. What concerns, if any, would you have about taking part in a Professional Development programme?
9. How do you perceive the future of the orchestra?
10. What are your personal ambitions as a professional player?
Appendix 2: Player interview schedule
1. What has been your overall impression of the workshop?
2. Have you been particularly challenged by anything that has happened in the workshop?
3. How would you like to see your experiences of working with orchestra change?
4. How do you see the future of the orchestra?
5. What are your attitudes to risk-taking in general?
6. What is your experience of communication within the orchestra?

Appendix 3: Management interview schedule
1. What did you take away from yesterday? (Manager 1)
2. Would you like to be more involved in any future workshops? (Manager 2)
3. What are your visions for the future of the orchestra?
4. How do you perceive the relationships within the orchestra?
5. How do you perceive the role of Musical Director within the orchestra?
6. Is there anything you would like to ask me about in my role as researcher?

Appendix 4: Performance evaluation sheet
Please answer items 1–6 on a scale of 1–10. 1 = poor, 10 = excellent.

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<th>PERFORMANCE 1</th>
<th>PERFORMANCE 2</th>
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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Group</td>
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<td>2. Intonation</td>
<td>2. Intonation</td>
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<td>Group</td>
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<td>3. Expressivity</td>
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<td>4. Rhythmic Accuracy</td>
<td>4. Rhythmic Accuracy</td>
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<td>5. Melodic Accuracy</td>
<td>5. Melodic Accuracy</td>
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<td>6. Inter-player Communication</td>
<td>6. Inter-player Communication</td>
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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>7. Overall Perception of performance</td>
<td>7. Overall Perception of Performance</td>
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Appendix 5: Post-workshop feedback
1. Has the workshop had any noticeable influence on your work with the orchestra, your colleagues and Musical Director [principal conductor]?
2. Are there any elements of the workshop that you would like to see developed further?
3. In what ways (if any) has the workshop impacted on your personal approach to music making?
5. Other relevant comments?